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1. (Original) A method of forming a nearly planar dielectric film on a metal layer, comprising:

forming a metal layer having a predetermined maximum feature spacing;
forming an oxide layer on the metal layer using a TEOS-based procedure;
facet-etching the oxide layer; and
reflowing at least a portion of the oxide layer.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein forming the metal layer comprises forming metal layer with a maximum feature spacing of 0.3 microns.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein forming the metal layer comprises forming metal runners and wherein forming the oxide layer forms oxide on one or more sidewalls of the metal runners.

4. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 1~~ A method of forming a nearly planar dielectric film on a metal layer, comprising:

forming a metal layer having a predetermined maximum feature spacing;
forming an oxide layer on the metal layer using a TEOS-based procedure;
facet-etching the oxide layer; and
reflowing at least a portion of the oxide layer,

wherein forming the oxide layer comprises forming a portion of the oxide layer using a TEOS-based procedure at a first deposition rate and forming a portion of the oxide layer using a TEOS-based procedure at a second deposition rate which is less than the first deposition rate.

5. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 1~~ A method of forming a nearly planar dielectric film on a metal layer, comprising:

forming a metal layer having a predetermined maximum feature spacing;

forming an oxide layer on the metal layer using a TEOS-based procedure;
facet-etching the oxide layer; and
reflowing at least a portion of the oxide layer,

wherein forming the oxide layer comprises forming a portion of the oxide layer using a TEOS-based procedure at a first deposition rate having a tendency to form voids and forming a portion of the oxide layer using a TEOS-based procedure at a second deposition rate having a tendency to form substantially no voids or fewer voids than the first deposition rate.

7. (Previously Presented) A method comprising:

forming a metal layer having a predetermined maximum feature spacing of 0.3 microns;

forming a first oxide layer using a TEOS-based procedure at a first deposition rate on the metal layer;

forming a second oxide layer on the first oxide layer using a TEOS-based procedure at a second deposition rate which is less than the first deposition rate; and

facet etching the second oxide layer.

8. (Previously Presented) A method comprising:

forming a metal layer;

depositing a film resistant to lateral etching on the metal layer;

etching the metal layer to form a metal pattern having a predetermined maximum feature spacing of 0.3 microns;

forming a first oxide layer using a TEOS-based procedure at a first deposition rate on the metal pattern;

forming a second oxide layer on the first oxide layer using a TEOS-based procedure at a second deposition rate which is less than the first deposition rate; and

facet etching the second oxide layer.

43. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein forming the metal layer comprises:

identifying and filling in open areas of a metal layout with floating metal;

identifying and filling in notches of the metal layout; and

identifying and filling in corners of the metal layout.

44. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 7, wherein the TEOS-based procedure at the first deposition rate has a tendency to form voids and the TEOS-based procedure at the second deposition rate has a tendency to form substantially no voids or fewer voids than the first deposition rate.

45. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 7, further including:

reflowing at least a portion of the oxide layer; and

depositing a film resistant to lateral etching.

46. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 7, wherein forming the metal layer comprises forming a first metal layer;

depositing a film resistant to lateral etching on the first metal layer; and

etching the first metal layer to form a metal pattern having a predetermined maximum feature spacing of 0.3 microns to form the metal layer.

47. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 7, wherein forming the metal layer comprises:

identifying and filling in open areas of a metal layout with floating metal;

identifying and filling in notches of the metal layout; and

identifying and filling in corners of the metal layout.

48. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 8, wherein the TEOS-based procedure at the first deposition rate has a tendency to form voids and the TEOS-based procedure at the second deposition rate has a tendency to form substantially no voids or fewer voids than the first deposition rate.

49. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 8, wherein forming the metal layer comprises:

providing a first metal layout having a first pattern fill density;

generating a metal layout pattern based on the first metal layout and having a second pattern fill density greater than the first pattern fill density;

forming a metal pattern on a layer;

depositing a dielectric material on the metal pattern at a first deposition rate; and

depositing a dielectric material on the deposited dielectric material at a second deposition rate less than the first deposition rate.